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SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERETHNIC CONTACTS OF WOMEN IN A POST-WAR DIVIDED CITY – KOSOVO CASE

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Abstract:

This paper is a result of perennial theoretical and methodological studies and empirical research of the impact of social changes on the daily life of women in a post-conflict social environment. Keeping in mind that this paper is part of a more extensive field research, it focuses on some characteristics of interethnic contacts, which at the same time, are interreligious contacts between Orthodox and Muslim women (Serbian, Albanian and Bosnian). Characteristics of interethnic contacts of women in a daily life contextual framework are described and explained within the Kosovar post-war divided city Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, with special emphasis on the grassroots women’s association called the “Women Center.” The first part of the field research was conducted in the summers of 2010 and 2011 and the second part in the summer of 2018, in order to compare the manifest forms of interethnic contacts of the women. The core component of the paper is the results and discussion segment, which, by stressing the voices of those interviewed, shows how post-conflict daily life has some positive moments of interethnic encounters, even with short-term effects.

Keywords: women, daily life, interethnic contacts, interreligious contacts Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovo.

Introduction

Ethnic conflict in Kosovo\(^1\) took place in the period from 1997 to 1999. Besides the terrestrial effects of the Yugoslav Army, on one side, and the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army,\(^1\) The status of Kosovo is not prejudiced in this paper. Also, the Serbian name for the territory is Kosovo and Metohija, while Albanian name is Kosova. In this paper the author uses the international name Kosovo.
on the other side, the epilogue of the conflict was the bombing of the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the entry of NATO troops to Kosovo on June 12, 1999. From that day on, Kosovo has become a de facto territory under the UN protectorate, but remains de iure part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia. However, in February 2008, Kosovar authorities unilaterally proclaimed the independence of Kosovo, which to date, has been recognized by almost two-thirds of the world countries, but not the Republic of Serbia. In April 2013, political representatives of Serbia and Kosovo, with the mediation of the European Union representatives, signed the so-called “Brussels Agreement,” which implies the “normalization” of the relations between the two parties in the negotiations, which, at the time of the second phase of this survey carried out in 2018, has not occurred.

For decades, Kosovo has been the subject of numerous researches in the field of social sciences by foreign Albanian and Serbian authors, whose works are often not exempted from the influence of the “competing” historical view on said territory.² With this in mind, the aim of this paper is not to point to the root of the Kosovo conflict and its manifestations, but exclusively to the efforts of local women to establish contacts with members of other ethnic and religious groups. More specifically, the study aims to answer the question of whether the women of the ethnically-divided city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica³ meet and, if so, to what extent is this the case, as well as what are the manifest forms of these interethnic encounters. Bearing in mind that in the mentioned territory, contacts between members of different ethnic groups can simultaneously represent inter-religious contacts (as is the case in contacts between Serbs and

² Hence, the researchers of contemporary Albanian-Serbian relations in Kosovo must be very cautious about the secondary material selection, especially in order to respect the criterion of scientific objectivity.
³ Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica has the status of a divided city since June 1999, when the population was ethnically grouped in the southern (mostly Albanian) and northern (mostly Serbian) part of the city. In contrast with the southern part of the city, the northern part contains ethnically plural neighborhoods “Bosniak Mahala,” “Mikronaselje/ Kodra Minatoreve” and “Three Skyscrapers,” which continue to represent a spatial framework of sporadic interethnic intolerance.
Albanians or Serbs and Bosniaks), for the purposes of this work, we shall consider contacts both interethnic and interreligious.  

This paper represents one part of a more extensive theoretical and empirical research and presents a segment of field research, implemented using the case method. Primarily, the first part of the work provides a chronological presentation of the scientific orientation to the everyday life of women in Kosovo, through the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. In the second part of the paper, the results of the field research are presented—the outcome of in-depth interviews with 30 girls and women (ages 18 to 65 years), of Serbian, Albanian and Bosniak ethnicity, sharing the daily experience of life in an ethnically-divided city, where low-intensity conflicts still occur sporadically 20 years later. The survey was conducted on two occasions, during the summer of 2011 and the summer of 2018, with the aim of detecting the manifest forms and frequencies of contacts between members of different ethnic/religious groups.

Thus, the divided city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica is a kind of social “laboratory,” in which the post-war transformation is directly manifested in the shaping of the everyday life of

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4 During the field research, we asked the interviewees questions that belong to the sphere of manifest religiousness. Nevertheless, it turned out that the interviewees “equalize” their ethnic and religious affiliation, and that the manifesting forms of religiousness are of traditional character (celebration of large religious holidays, going to religious temples at large religious holidays, celebrating patron saints among Orthodox interviewees). Regarding women’s interethnic contacts, it turned out that those who make these contacts by rule go to service on the occasion of big holidays. Thus, the Serbian women go to their Albanian and Bosniak neighbors for the cakes (baklava), on the occasion of the largest Muslim holiday Ramadan, and they “return” the visit especially for the biggest Orthodox holiday of Easter, when they leave home with a gift - boiled red-colored egg, with which they “paint” the faces of their family members, so that they would have “a healthy rosy glow” throughout the year.

5 Comprehensive research is available in the monograph of Ivana Milovanović, Post-Conflict Society and Everyday Woman, (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa and Priština-Leposavić: Institute for Serbian Culture, 2016).

6 In July 2011, the Serbs from the northern part of the city tried to resist the efforts of Kosovo’s authorities to exercise full control over the northern part of the territory. The most obvious manifestation of this resistance was setting up earthen barricades to the city center bridge, which is a symbol of the ethnic division of the city. After a series of consequences of the “July Crisis,” Kosovo and Serbian officials signed the so-called “Brussels Agreement” on 19 April 2013, whose epilogue were parliamentary elections according to Kosovo law for the first time in the north of Kosovo in November 2013, the formation of local self-governments by the same laws, delegation of Serbian ministers in Kosovo’s government ... in August 2016, works on enabling the above mentioned bridge for smooth traffic started, which would symbolically mark the termination of institutional and everyday lifestyle division, which, at the time of the implementation of the survey in the summer of 2018, did not occur.

7 We use both the Albanian and Serbian name for the city.
women. The theoretical framework\textsuperscript{8} in the realization of the research consists of theories of everyday life, ethnic conflicts and gender, whose "connectivity" was a necessary condition for the creation of the empirical research plan. In socio-demographic terms, the interviewees were unemployed women/homemakers, activists from the civil and international sectors and pensioners who live and work in both parts of the divided city.

**Chronological Presentation of the Dominant Features of the Everyday Life of Women in Kosovo in the 20th and the First Decades of the 21st Century**

For a clearer consideration of the manifest forms of the everyday life of women in Kosovo in post-conflict social conditions, it is necessary to chronologically indicate the differences in social position, as well as in the everyday life of women in different institutional frameworks in the 20th century. This society had a turbulent history, the consequences of which are multifarious in the sphere of everyday life. A review of the literature dedicated to everyday life can be classified in several periods: the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia\textsuperscript{9} (1945-1991), Serbia (with Kosovo) in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, but for the purposes of this paper, it will be pointed to the research in the last three indicated periods.\textsuperscript{10} The reason is better insight into the theoretical and methodological approach to the phenomenon of everyday life in different socio-political arrangements and ideological circumstances. Until the second half of the 20th century, the

\textsuperscript{8} The paper focuses solely on a review of empirical indicators of research, which is why the review of theoretical framework of research has not been given.

\textsuperscript{9} Hereinafter SFR Yugoslavia.

aforementioned society was predominantly rural, which is why it is not surprising that the economic and social modernization that was to be achieved has been delayed.

Soon after the Second World War, works dedicated to the social position and everyday life of women have appeared in sociological literature. However, the abeyance of many social problems speaks of manipulation over women, for ideological and party benefits. Women, in addition to declarative institutional support, “were actually left to themselves, as well as to forming and mutually cooperating women's organizations, as one of the means for concrete improvement of the social position.”¹¹ In the sphere of everyday life, above all the family structure, in the era of socialism, they have received more responsibility and control over family life. However, men still had the ability to prevent women's independent decision-making. Thus, the woman is “doubly present” and “doubly burdened,” since she gets part of the autonomy through the activity of working,¹² but in the family, she still has to resort to informal/subtle strategies to improve her position. Even more so, the other spheres of everyday life, like free time and spending, are in the shadow of family and work. In Kosovo, socialism has to some extent, amortized inter-ethnic animosities. Following the texts of academic literature, Kosovo has been described as an example of the positive impact of rapid urbanization and industrialization, which in this least developed part of the-then SFR Yugoslavia, came about in the decades after the Second World War. Self-managing socialism, based on compulsory and free primary education, a free health care system, and hierarchical organization in all social spheres, are presented in the results of sociological research as a framework for the emancipation of


¹²This is evidenced by the fact that in 1981 in Yugoslavia, the number of women in leadership positions was ten times smaller than the number of men. See: Božo Milošević, The Art of Work, (Novi Sad: Prometej, 2004), 290.
women. In the research of that period, mostly based on the works of Marx and Engels, and in the sphere of daily life of Lefebvre and Heller, the question of the social position of women was looked at so that “women always remained in an abstract and economical causal scheme.” The domains of other empirical research were descriptive, describing the demographic, religious, and cultural characteristics of certain ethnic groups, as well as the Albanian family cooperative—a specific type of family-economic order, which in that ethnic group, existed in the second half of the 20th century. In those papers, there were no attempts to make comparisons on ethnicity, religion, gender or on any other basis. In the decades that followed, the dominant issues of study became social conflicts, migrations, refugees and displaced persons, and delayed modernization, which left everyday life neglected, although precarious socio-political changes left an evident trail on this social sphere.

The research results indicate the socialization of generations of women (and men) based on traditional patriarchal values. Thus, for example, Gjergj Rrapi, in regards to the attitude of members of the cooperative and wider community, in the time of the SFRY, emphasized: “A woman has never been in the League of Communists and is not engaged in socio-political work. Not that they were not liberated from the traditional perceptions, but their husbands, brothers-in-law and others were not freed from these views. Such a patriarchal spirit about women dictates their behaviour outside the cooperative: they rarely leave the house, their getting out is only

14 Žarana Papić, Sociology and Feminism, (Belgrade: IIC, SSOS,. 1989), 40.
justified in cases of illness, parental illness, feasts (slava) or some unforeseen event. Their getting out to the immediate neighborhood must be supported by strong reasons.”

We can also find compatible conclusions in the research of Ruža Petrović, who noted: “When this is added to the lack of education of the female Albanian population and the rule of norms of customary law that does not allow women to have independent existence and economic independence, it is clear why the economic activity among the Albanian women is negligible and even declining. Such peculiarities of the family on one side and the abundance of male labour force on the other, firmly hold the Albanian women out of the contemporary society and its influence.”

Thus, a large number of women did not have the capacity to transform their everyday life, especially since they were educated from the primary socialization in the spirit of submissiveness to a man (father, and later to a husband). In this context, the easiest way for women to improve their place in the family and the local community was by giving birth to male children, which links the social position of women exclusively with parenting. Hence, it is clear that many women built their identity based on a gender role, which made emancipation steps more difficult. If we mention the lack of interest among actors for the development of a multicultural environment, it becomes clear why women in Kosovo were subordinated to a man primarily in the private sphere. All the more, the religious affiliation of women was also an important factor in everyday life, since the official policy of the SFR Yugoslavia was antireligious. Based on the sociological research carried out at the end of the 1960s, the relation of religiousness between women and men was 2:1. “According to the indicators: 15.6 percent of women regularly go to church opposed to 6.8 percent of men; 26.4 percent of women are regularly praying at home to 10.9

17 Gjerđ Rrapi, Contemporary Albanian Cooperative Family in Kosovo, 89-90.
18 Ruža Petrović, Demographic Peculiarities of Kosovo's Development and Ethnic Opportunities, Serbs and Albanians in the 20th Century, (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, 1991), 189.
percent of men. The religious studies scholars often explain this difference in the level of religiousness in women and men with the greater emotionality of women, stronger susceptibility provoked by religious ceremonies, but also the greater connection of a significant number of women for the household and monotony of domestic life, so that going to church implies the social touch.”\textsuperscript{20} Although sociological researches show that in the decades that followed the collapse of the SFR Yugoslavia, the religiousness of women and men declined, due to strong ideological influences,\textsuperscript{21} the link between traditional patriarchal ideology and religious practice in everyday life was not eradicated in women.

In the last decade of the 20th century, due to the break-up of the once common state, the rapid impoverishment of citizens, the influx of refugees from the territory of the former Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, followed by intense media nationalist propaganda, representatives of religions/churches “used” space for their own reaffirmation and the influence on official political life in society, but also on the everyday life of citizens. This is especially true for the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo since 1989.\textsuperscript{22} From the above, it follows that at the time of secularization of the Yugoslav society, the number of non-religious citizens was unrealistically large, while the number of declared believers rose sharply with the desecularization and revitalization of religion. However, it is difficult to talk about the authentic religiousness of those who claim to be believers, since the apparent secularization took place in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with imposed atheization, while the process that followed the break-up of that state can be described under intense deatheization.

\textsuperscript{22} That year marked 600 years since the Battle of Kosovo (1389), one of the key events in the history of the Serbian nation.
Keeping in mind the previously mentioned socio-political cumulative effects of society’s disintegration, the social position of women at the end of the 20th century was inversely proportional to the process of emancipation. Reaffirmation of patriarchal-moral values and norms for women has “restored” the traditional gender role. The unconsolidated social position of women was compounded by the situation in which the family was taken as a metonymy for the nation, which led them to the position of the guardians of their own nation. The accumulated economic, social, political, cultural and psychological problems conditioned the state of the grey everyday life, and women shouldered the greatest burden of that process.

Since the establishment of the international protectorate in Kosovo in June 1999, the post-war transformation of Kosovo began. Keeping in mind that war and everyday life appeared to be gender-determined, with all social changes being directly embedded in the everyday life of its citizens, it is not surprising that women in the post-war Kosovo were doubly “invisible.” Women/members of all ethnic groups directed all their resources to satisfy the needs of their family (husbands, elderly members of the family), and especially their children who were “the only vertical and cumulant in the bare, poor and cyclical everyday life.”

However, within the context of the post-war transformation in Kosovo, representatives of international and civil society organizations recognized the importance of women's participation in the local community, and they saw women as social actors who needed to achieve the first interethnic contacts. One example of this initiative was the so-called Women Center in the ethnic

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23 In the territory of Serbia (above all Belgrade), in the mentioned period, feminists resisted nationalist ideology by activism in the civil sector, but the outcome of this resistance remained in the shadow of all the cumulative consequences of society destruction and the “escape” of ordinary people in the sphere of privacy.

24 The authors of the research and published works (Serbian, Albanian and foreign) were often ethically biased, which is why the characteristics of history, tradition and everyday life of a community have been magnified, while minimizing the positive characteristics of the other. For this reason one should be especially careful in the analysis of secondary material during the realization of a research related to the mentioned territory.

plural part of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, better known as Mikronaselje/Kodra Minatoreva. This is a house where representatives of a local NGO managed to gather women of Serbian, Albanian, and Bosniak ethnicity met twice a week. In this space, women attended lectures on gender equality, reproductive health, domestic violence, and other current social issues, and were able to participate in joint knitting, crochet, and weaving activities. The NGOs organized exhibitions of the works produced in these activities during various public promotions. In the Women Center, there was a room for children, where the women’s children played. In this way, interethnic and inter-religious contact of women from the aforementioned part of the city were able to occur. In time, the financial donations that the NGOs received from their international donors were reduced, which led to the arrival of fewer women in this center, but the center is a positive example of organized interethnic and inter-religious contacts of women.

The outcome of such projects were established interethnic contacts, which would be slower if they depended on spontaneous initiatives for women. These projects are not scientific but activist, and they have served as a starting point for initiating interethnic contacts among women. These projects are in line with the proposal presented by Marina Blagojević almost three decades ago, which stated: “a program of ethnic integration is necessary to change inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. Unlike economic policy, state or cultural policy, this program should introduce changes on the micro, rather than macro-level, in a systematic and planned manner, which will lead to the establishment of broken links, a human communication between members of different ethnic groups. The micro level implies narrow groups formed at the level of

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26 The name of the ethnically plural neighborhood in Serbian and Albanian.
27 For example, the project “Women Together for Human Rights”, funded by the European Commission, is currently being implemented by the local NGOs Caritas and Community Building Mitrovica. The core of the project is joint engagement of women from different ethnic groups from Kosovska Mitrovica, with the aim of improving the cooperation of women, their social position, and joint lobbying with donors when it comes to building infrastructure projects.
Decades later, the everyday/micro aspects of life was deemed necessary to achieve the affirmation of interethnic tolerance, supported by the results of this field research.

**Women Center – An Interethnic Meeting Place of Women in a Post-conflict Divided City**

Through our introduction with the “field,” the spatial framework for the research, we learned about the existence of the so-called Women Center, which is located in a family house of an Albanian woman in the ethnically-mixed neighborhood. Mikronaselje/Kodra Minatoreve,29 in the northern part of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. This woman, a civil society activist, came up with an idea of gathering women/ her former neighbors in her family house30 twice a week, as to re-establish contacts and start socializing again. The idea gradually evolved into a project within the NGO where she currently works. The funds involved three coordinators (two of Albanian and one of Serbian ethnicity), who opened the doors of the Women Center during specific times on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and spent as much time with women as the dynamics and activities of the group required. Apart from plain socializing with coffee or tea, the project envisaged active use of this leisure time of women through courses of sewing, knitting, production of soap, and similar activities that were familiar to these mostly unemployed women. The products of their works were later presented at exhibitions, also organized by the organization, which monitored the project. In the premises of the center, lectures on gender equality and empowerment of women were held through presentations of opportunities for (self) employment.

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29 We use both Albanian and Serbian names for the neighborhood.

30 The above mentioned “organizer” at the center left her house, along with the members of her family in 1999, and has relocated to the south part of the city.
We monitored these activities intensively for six months during 2010, by visiting the center, observing the manner in which the women communicated, their propensity to converse with women of other ethnicities, as well as the activities with which they kept themselves occupied. The participants of the project were female members of ethnic groups living in Mikronaselje/Kodra Minatoreve—Serbs, Albanians and Bosniaks. Thus, we asked interviewees to answer a series of questions regarding their free time spent in the Women Center. Their answers primarily emphasized the need for the interviewees to actively spend time outside the home, as well as to establish contacts with other women (the members of the same or other ethnic groups), which was initiated “on the side” by the employees at the Women Center. The positive feature of the center was that it contained a “children’s room,” thus the interviewees whose children were 12 years old or younger, brought their kids, who played in the room. This was also a way of establishing interethnic contacts among the children, who did not speak the language of the “other” children, but as it turned out, that has not created any obstacle for them to play together. The Women Center was thus a kind of a “laboratory,” as the observation with participation and in-depth interviews allowed us to observe the process of (re)building of interethnic relations among women on a micro level, which was not the case with the interviews with those who were not coming to the center.31

The center was not advertised in the media, nor were there other forms of informing the public of the existence of such a place. One of the reasons is related to security issues, as the center is located in the northern part of the divided city, where the core of the everyday life of Serbs is refusal of any kind of interethnic reconciliation. Due to the safety of the participants in the project, it was important that as few people as possible knew that such a project existed. The official rationale given by the representatives of the center was that it is a cramped space, which

31 We monitored the results of such an approach up until the end of the “project”, i.e. until the end of 2010.
cannot accommodate a large number of women. It is an important observation on the part of one interviewee, who emphasized that the participants in the center’s activities were mainly homemakers, a fact that was later corroborated by our research. Although the project coordinator did not expect only unemployed women to take part in the activities in the center, it turned out that women who worked “did not have time” for such activities. Work and family duties were often used as an excuse for inactivity, which indirectly points out the lack of inclination for establishing contacts with unfamiliar women, and even more so, with women who are members of other ethnic groups. The participants in the activities of the Women Center were interviewed on issues relating to when they started coming to the center, how often, and why they came.

K.K (Albanian woman, single, 40): “I do not work anywhere. We did not have freedom of movement for the past few years, but we commuted to the south by bus, which departs at 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. That time schedule did not suit me, so I did not go outside of the house much. When the center opened, I hardly waited to “get out of the house” and to do something different. And I got to know new women.”

R.S. (Albanian woman, single, 32): “I go (to the center) because I do not have a job, to pass the time”.

S.G. (Albanian woman, single, 19): “My mother used to take me along with her when I was little. I played with other children.”

I.Dž. (Bosniak woman, married, 46): I go to the center from its inception—from 2003. It is a nice idea. We take children to play there, and they give us threads, and we knit.”

I.M. (Serbian woman, married, 75): “I go to the center for the past few years. I have heard from other women who went there that they got plenty of sewing materials. They also received some bags, and also the swimming tires, for those who had little children. So, I went
there too. That was how I also started going there. And the idea is excellent. I go there and relax as I am surrounded only with women. We chat and laugh every time.”

A majority of the interviewees participated in the Women Center’s activities, due to their lack of work and money as well, which they saw as a novelty and a way to spend free time outside the home. The center had been running since 2003. At that time, in Kosovo, there were not yet many donors and humanitarian organizations to provide humanitarian aid to the active participants. This is the reason why many of the answers of the women who attended the center since its inception differ from those who joined it later. Thus, some women were motivated to come to the center for material reasons. If we take into account the fact that these were mostly homemakers, it is clear why sewing material like wool and thread are seen as important resources to a creative and valuable use of leisure time. In subsequent years, the activities changed and focused on computer courses, traveling throughout Kosovo, and ultimately lectures on the subject of gender equality. Thus, the “circle” of activities within the center had been rounded up, as the founders of the center could no longer justify its existence to donors “solely” because of the manual works or for socializing. However, we were interested to find out more about all the activities of the women interviewees.

K.K (Albanian woman, single, 40): We did not do anything at the beginning. They gave wool and threads as present. It was not interesting to me. But as time passed, we had a three-month course on computers, then we had various human rights seminars. They took us to trips. For example, we enjoyed great time in Prizren. We visited a church there too.”

M.K. (Albanian woman, single, 32): “I attended the computer course and did some needlework”
I. Dž. (Bosniak woman, married, 46): “At the very beginning we just drank coffee and talked with women who were coming. The children played in another room. Then, over the time, they gave us threads, canvas, wool, up until few years ago. I remember that few years ago, during the Ramazan fasting, each evening they gave diner to women in the center. And it was like that for 27 days. And, usually on March 8, we received gifts.”

Š.M. (Albanian woman, married, 64): “At first, we have just hanged out with other women. Until March 17, 2004, there were many women in that center. Many of them were just using the center—taking thread and wool, and did not come regularly, as the rest of us did. It is a good idea—we sit, drink tea and coffee, we take thread and wool and knit for ourselves. We were not obliged to return the needlework.”

I.M. (Serbian woman, married, 75): “Well, we hang out a bit, we receive some presents. I got two bed sheets, cloth, coffee cups, crochet yarn, wool. All that remains with us, we were not obliged to return it back”.

N.H. (Albanian woman, married, 63): “The activities are not that interesting. But the fact that I am surrounded by other women is. Simply, I like being in a company.”

D.S. (Serbian woman, married, 39): “I go there because the center is a good idea. I like to paint plates and glasses, so it is interesting for me to go there. It would be much better if such a center existed only for Serbian women, but the donors insist on multiethnicity.”

The activities had shifted throughout the years, but the idea of donating materials for handmade work remained a distinctive feature of the Women Center. As it turned out, this suited the majority of our interviewees, who told us about knitting sweaters for their children, which is of use in the everyday life of women who cannot financially contribute to raising their children.
The younger interviewees described the computer course, seminars and trips, which are understandable indicators of interests among members of different generations.

The interviewee who openly stated it would be better if the center was intended only for Serbian women indirectly highlights the answers received from a few Serbians, particularly those who expected to receive gifts from representatives of the Center, and who in later phases of the interview, emphasized the fact that they do not socialize in private with women of other ethnicities. Such a response clearly points out to the inertness of the Serbians to establish interethnic contacts, which is not so clearly present with Albanians and Bosniaks. The greater willingness to engage in interethnic contacts of women of the two mentioned ethnic groups is linked with the fact that they are ethnic minorities within the northern part of an already divided city, and by being a “minority,” they must adjust to life with the “majority.”

As most of the interviewed women cited socializing as the most important activity and the reason for coming to the center, we were interested in finding out whether they knew other women from the center, whether they socialized privately with other women from the center, and if so, how long had they done it. Their answers were as follows:

T.T. (Albanian woman, married, 34): “Some women I knew earlier as they live in the neighborhood. Since I have started coming to the center, however, I know them better and I like the fact that we socialize. We initiate the meetings outside the center together.”

G.L. (Serbian woman, married, 51): “I was acquainted with most of the women earlier. We do not socialize privately, but the time we spend at the center is really nice. Then, when we return back home we return to routines and our daily duties.”

M.K (Albanian woman, single, 32): “I have met the majority of women at the center, and I see them only here. I speak Serbian badly, so it is unpleasant for me to initiate contacts, so I
mostly socialize with Albanians, in particular, with the younger ones. The older ladies are nice, but we have no discussion topics.”

I. DŽ. (Bosniak woman, married, 46): “I knew some women before, some I did not. I think the other women have accepted me well. I feel excellent there. When Tuesday and Saturday come, whatever I did in my house, I quit the work and go to the center. There I ‘rest my mind.’ The center is well-designed, especially for those of us who do not work. “

I. M. (Serbian, married, 75 years old): “Well, while we are there, we get along well. But when we go back home, we socialize with ‘our people.’ So, outside the center I drink coffee only with Serbians.”

Based on the responses of the interviewees, it was clear that the Albanian and Bosniak women more frequently initiated contacts with other women compared to the Serbian interviewees. If we consider that this is an ethnically mixed area, the previous conclusion can be explained as an effort invested by the minority groups (in this particular neighborhood, those are Albanians and Bosniaks) to integrate in the everyday life of the majority and to keep good neighborly relations. In addition, in the last 20 years, the Serbians (men and women) adopted a “strategy” of distancing themselves from members of other ethnic groups, primarily Albanians. As the pressures for “accepting a new reality” or life under the auspices of the “Kosovar state” grew stronger, the Serbs became even more disturbed and distanced themselves from contact with Albanians. Thus, it is not surprising that certain material gain, rather than establishing interethnic relations, was the leading reason that a certain number of Serbians came to the center.

On the other hand, we should note that the interviewees of Albanian and Bosniak ethnicity, kept in their minds, at all times, the fact that they were speaking with a researcher who did not belong to their ethnic group; some of them obviously attempted to present themselves as women
ready to establish interethnic contacts. Some of them, very discreetly, made it clear that simply accepting to be interviewed by a researcher, who did not belong to their ethnic group, was proof of their readiness for life in peace and tolerance. Among some Serbian interviewees, we noticed a completely opposite tendency. Within a post-conflict discourse of distancing themselves from the “enemies,” they considered it desirable to present themselves as women who did not establish contacts with the members of other ethnicities.32 This is the reason why we deduced some conclusions indirectly, and posed questions related to the initiation of interethnic contacts several times in different manners, in order to obtain the clearest picture on whether these women truly believed not only in the idea behind the “Women Center,” the place where they gathered, but also in the idea of a common coexistence within an ethnically plural environment. We also asked questions on what members of their families thought about them going to the center, if and why they would take their children to the center, as well as whether children voluntarily would go to the center and socialize with children of other nationalities. Here were their responses:

I.Dž. (Bosniak, married, 46 years old): “My daughters are grown up so they go with me and participate in the activities at the center. The son is still young and he plays with other kids there. The children get along well and play those games, which do not require the use of both languages or for example, a child who speak both languages translates. It happens at times that they come to the room where we are, the mothers, so they ask us to translate during the game. But the language is not an obstacle for kids. They are interested only in the game. My husband

32 This also presents a methodological challenge in the application of the case study method, and qualitative research techniques in such a socio-cultural context. It is more likely that the interviewees would more honestly respond to the questions if they either filled in the questionnaire independently, or that all the interviewees responded to the member of their own ethnic group, as suspicion and incomplete readiness to openly respond to all questions were noticeable with some interviewees.
does not respond positively or negatively to the center. He is not interested that much why I go there. I guess it is because it is close, in the same street.”

T.T. (Albanian, married, 34 years old): “I take children with me to the center, and they come gladly. They like to be in a company with other children, as they do not go out on the streets. My husband agrees with me on coming to the center, though, when he comes back from work, I am already at home.”

D.S. (Serbian, married, 39 years old): “My son likes to be in the center, though he does not speak Albanian. However, it is interesting to him to listen to a language he does not know. The children also show interest in learning few words from Serbian or Albanian. That is interesting to them.”

I.M. (Serbian, married, 75 years old): All of my life I have been a housewife, spending time in the house. Now there is no person who could forbid something to me. Even in this period of life, we want to go out of the house, go out and chat a bit with other women.”

K.K. (Albanian woman, single, 40): "My mother does not say anything. I do not even know what she would tell me. I do not have a job and I sit all day at home and take care of her. This way, at least twice a week I go to the center, and there we organize some activity, and we have a great time."

All the interviewees who attended the center were satisfied with the time they spent there. Based on the interviews, we can conclude that they planned their home and family responsibilities so they could always have time for the center. On the other hand, the response of one interlocutor, who noted that socializing in the center would end before the husband left work, indicates that the time of the activity is carefully selected to not disturb daily family obligations (like lunch time, for example). The response of the interviewee, who said she spent her "whole"
life at home and was not too interested in what her other family members would say about her participation in the center, leads us to draw the conclusion that at a certain stage of life, even women whose life is bound to traditionally-patriarchal norms decide when that time "came to an end." The response: "My husband does not forbid me" can mean that her husband determined "her movement" during her earlier stages of life, but this period of her life brought new priorities and views on some social norms. When the interviewee, who had been a homemaker all her life, said, "the elderly have to leave the house," in her response, we hear the narrative of sadness and remorse that this was not the case in previous years. The time and place, which limit the activities of the center, "do not leave" much room for the participants to complain about the departure of women from the center. The time involved the working hours of the husbands, and the place referred to the "neighborhood," so if necessary, women could leave the center and return to their homes very quickly. This indicates that the basic duty of our female interviewees was to "be available" for family members if needed. This is not surprising if we consider that these were mainly unemployed interviewees, in whose families and in the post-war-years, forms of traditional norms in the family persisted.

In addition to the center representing a place for "shortening" routinized time, a characteristic of housekeeping, it was obvious with the interviewees that their children were interested in going to the center and making contacts with other children. A language that does not have any similarity is not a problem in playing games and socializing, because it is about children, who are younger, and whose activities in games do not necessarily require verbal communication. Furthermore, Albanian children live in certain isolation from their peers from the southern part of the city, because mainly Serbian children in their neighborhood surround them. Ethnic plurality of children is seen as an advantage precisely because more children are in
the game, and this game is more interesting. Also, the center presented controlled conditions, as mothers were always present in another room and socializing with other women, providing their children an example of interethnic communication.

Women who did not speak Serbian or Albanian (which has a larger presence in the environment) also went to the center. In principle, this is an obstacle for getting to know each other more closely, and especially socializing out of the center, but other women, who spoke both languages, were pleased to take on the role of translators. So, looking in from the outside, it seemed that the women in the center represented a compact whole, since they all respected the time and activities that took place at the center.

As the center was part of a project of a non-governmental organization, at the very beginning of our research, it was clear that the center would eventually cease to exist. Namely, we started part of the field research on the Women Center in June 2010, and the center stopped running at the end of the same year. Six months of research gave us plenty of material, but the activities of women were becoming more modest each day, because the budgeted funds for the existence of the center were being depleted.

The almost certain closure of the center was the reason for our question to the interviewees on whether they would continue to socialize with/visit other women after the completion of the project. Most interviewees tacitly, through facial expressions, and others very openly, stated that they had few chances for self-initiative socializing outside the center. We were not surprised by these answers, as the interviewees already signaled that they met most of the women only twice a week at the center. Although these women lived in the neighborhood, they did not have contact that was more frequent. Some did not do it because they did not have the support of their family, primarily that of their husbands, to invite women of another nationalities to their house. The
others were not motivated for closer socializing, because they already had a circle of friends. A small number of interviewees stated they became nice acquaintances with some women, whose relationships they would want to nurture in the future. This is illustrated by their following answers:

I. M. (Serbian woman, married, 75): "I do not believe that I will visit these women because we did not visit each other during his project. We see each other there, gathered around the idea of knitting or sewing. We were 'killing time' there. When the project is over, we will find another entertainment."

T.K. (Albanian woman, married, 34): "I do not know the language, so I cannot even make contact with other women myself. This center was a great place. We all came to a 'neutral territory' and were equal."

I.J. (Bosniak woman, married, 46): "As far as I'm concerned, I would like to continue my contacts with the women. These are good women, we are similar. We all have similar obligations in our families. I speak both languages, so I socialize with all the women."

N.M. (Albanian woman, married, 64): "I do not think the women will socialize, maybe at first, but I doubt. As fewer women have come to the center since March 17, 2004, I think the women will not socialize. Maybe their husbands would not allow them to go to home visits, and they do not go to cafes, so they will not have a place to socialize. Besides, they did not just sit at the center and drank coffee. The time here was planned and guided. And when they are alone, it does not mean they would knit and drink tea or coffee."

The response of the last interviewee indicates several reasons for the low chances of women socializing after the completion of the project of the cited center. Apart from the fact that their husbands would most likely not agree with home visits, these women would not have a
room for a joint gathering, as visits to local cafes were not really their habit. This response, however, points to something even more important, which is the unwillingness of women to initiate contact. They reacted very positively to all the activities that the coordinators of the center created and offered, but women are not ready to prepare shared time, i.e., a way to spend time together. Furthermore, the remark noting that many more women came to the center before the "March violence" in 2004, suggests that a number of women stopped coming to the center for safety reasons or that they did not have the support of their family due to this event.

After the completion of the project in 2011, we repeated our interviews with center participants on the topic of leisure time, in order to determine if they remained in contact with the other women. We discovered that they did not remain in a close relationship because they were not ready to initiate socializing. We posed the question: "In your opinion, does the Women Centre contribute to a better understanding of women of different nationalities?", which acquired a slightly different dimension, which can be seen from the following responses:

D.S. (Serbian woman, married, 39): "Of course it contributes. Women have great time socializing. And the reason is that they do everything they love and talk about various topics. But one topic is forbidden—politics. Not only did the coordinators make it clear, but women also avoid this topic because they want to fit into the group and spend their leisure time without a

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33 The direct cause for the "March riots" was the announcement of news in the Albanian language about the drowning of three Albanian boys in the Ibar River, in the village Cabra, in the Serbian Municipality Zubin Potok, in the north of Kosovo, for whose death the Albanian and world media first blamed Serbs from a neighboring village Zupče. A subsequent UNMIK investigation showed that the charges were false. During the riots from 17 until 19 March 2004, about 3,870 Serbs from the central part of Kosovo and Metohija were expelled in two days. On this occasion, 31 people were killed and 870 injured. Thirty-four churches were burned or blown up, of which 18 were on the list of monuments of special cultural relevance, and three cemeteries were destroyed. Nine hundred thirty-five (935) houses and public buildings were destroyed. In addition, 72 UN vehicles were damaged and 35 KFOR soldiers were injured. On this occasion, six cities and nine villages were cleansed ethnically. It is believed that 51,000 people participated in 33 individual riots.
Š.M. (Albanian woman, married, 64): "We are better off at the center, one hundred times. We make jokes here and talk about all the topics—just us, women. And if there were not for the center, we would all be locked in houses."

S.A. (Serbian woman, married, 41): "The center contributes to better understanding, but it is closed. As soon as we get out of it, we are susceptible to the influence of politics and the media, both us, Serbian women, and them, Albanian women."

The responses of the interviewees underline the understanding of the Women Center as an excellent opportunity for active leisure time, but also an opportunity bound by time. The condition of the existence of a women's center through donations from (foreign) donors has led women to respect the time they spend in that "center," knowing it is temporary. Furthermore, some of them made it clear to us that it was not an interethnic dialogue that was the motive of their visits to the center, but rather "fleeing home," i.e., the routine that determines the everyday life of an unemployed woman. Some were motivated by the donation of funds for manual work. Finally, some wanted to establish contacts with other women, but did not talk about it as an opportunity to get to know women of other ethnicities. Only interviewees who spoke about the issue of socializing with women (members of other ethnic groups during and after the war in 1999) outside of the Women Center spoke positively about its significance, and insisted on the necessity of living in a multiethnic environment. These were, more often, Albanian women living in Mikronaselje/Kodra Minatoreve, where they were members of a minority ethnic group, as well as very few Serbian women and the female members of the Bosniak community. At the same time, these were interviewees over 40 years old, who were socialized in the institutional system of the former SFR Yugoslavia, who spoke excellent Serbian, and who attended school in
the Serbian language or worked in state-owned companies. Their responses are below:

N.H. (Albanian woman, married, 63): "Before the war, I socialized with Serbian women. We visited each other mainly for holidays, but we drank coffee without any official reasons. Then these contacts were interrupted during the war, because I went abroad with my family. During the war, everyone sought a way to escape from the city and find a shelter. In recent years, I have re-established these contacts and I often drink coffee with neighbors, Serbian women. We go shopping to the southern part of the city, if they need something."

Š.M. (Albanian woman, married, 64): "I always had a good time with Serbian women. And my husband with Serbs. But during the war, even though I was at home all the time, those neighbors were not allowed to come to my place for coffee. Our neighbors Serbs once saved us when the Albanian house next to ours was set on fire. They called firefighters. Whenever Serbs are protesting, my Serbian neighbor warns us not to leave the house. So, we are in contact and we will continue to be in touch, but we do not socialize much."

K.K. (Albanian woman, single, 40): "I have lived in this village all my life. Even before the center, I had Serbian neighbors, with whom I had a good time. Not only me, but also my mother. These neighbors defended us several times from some unknown people who wanted to drive us out of the house, immediately after the war. And I will continue to socialize with the women, like I have done so far."

I. M. (Serbian woman, married, 75): "I have always socialized with Albanian women. I went to various celebrations and congratulations, even though they did not call me. And now I'm in contact with neighbors from the southern part, because I lived there until the war in 1999. These neighbors come to the north, for pensions. All my neighbors feel grief for the fact that we no longer live together."
I.DŽ. (Bosniak woman, married, 46): "I speak both languages and I have socialized both with both Serbian and Albanian women. I grew up with both of them. During the war I was with my family in Turkey, but after the war, we were again in good relations with all neighbors”.

Interviewees who affirmatively spoke about interethnic contacts depended on the protection of neighbors, mostly Serbs, in some way. However, they did not socialize with them intensely. We observed this in the answer of several interviewees. As if it were a tacit agreement, in terms of neighbors, Serbs protect them from possible security problems by informing them of these problems, but Albanians and Serbs did not appear in public together, nor did they talk "too much and too long" when they met in the street, or even stayed long in the streets. It was a mutual protection and concern for the welfare of their neighbors, because the last thing the Albanians, who were supported by their Serb neighbors, wanted was for these Serbs to become the target of those Serbs who advocated the severing of ties with Albanians, even if they were neighbors. Other women said that they did not have much opportunity to establish interethnic contacts because of "family responsibilities," or because they were not engaged in employment, so they did not acquire new acquaintances.

The Women Center had multiple meanings for interviewees because it represented a kind of "escape from gray political daily life." It was, at the same time, the only common denominator of the responses of all interviewees who spent their time there. Similarity-wise, their responses suggested the thought of matching activities inherent to women of all ethnic groups. Ultimately, as these interviewees were not active in the workplace, we can conclude that the everyday life of homemakers was much more determined by their status and activities in the family than by their ethnicity. Other motives for coming to the center pointed to various interests of members of different generational groups. While some interviewees were motivated by the donated thread
and wool, others wanted to attend a computer course and go to joint excursions. The smallest portion of women emphasized interethnic contacts as a motive for coming to the center, and these contacts are the exact reason why donors finance projects of this kind. Since the project was funded from 2003 to 2010, they felt that interethnic contacts had already been strengthened, which is why they felt there was no need for further "injection" of funds into this part of the local community, as seven years should be enough time for the members of the local community to be empowered to establish interethnic contacts themselves.

However, this is the key of the essential misunderstanding of the everyday life of women in a post-conflict environment by international donors and decision-makers in the political sphere. While employed women do not even show an interest in establishing interethnic contacts, except for those officially established at work, unemployed women show an interest, but do not show an initiative for these contacts. Economic dependence on husbands, who were mostly active in combat during the ethnic conflict, the care of children and elderly family members and home affairs are the backbone of everyday life. The initiative is shown only in socializing with women who have known each other for a long time or those families who have shown a protective role in cases of interethnic tension. Nevertheless, even with these families, socializing is not transparent, so as not to bring their security into question in their own ethnic group. Attempts by non-governmental organizations to bring members of different ethnic groups closer usually have a positive outcome. The non-governmental sector is the only one with the capacity to carry out activities aimed at interethnic reconciliation and dialogue, mainly at the level of everyday life. The work and existence of non-governmental organizations are conditioned, however, by financial donations. Moreover, all of these donations are bound by a period and are not long-term. The positive side of the projects of this center is meeting with actors, in this case women,
and their joint activities. However, all actors are aware that activities are short-term, which is why no one takes into account sustainability through self-initiative, but time is actively spent only when someone else designs the time and, ultimately, pays. Thus, dozens of projects in the nearly 20-year period are now part of the past. Women recall these projects, i.e., the activities on these projects, but do not show the motivation to take their own steps towards a more fulfilling, meaningful leisure time. They return to the routine of everyday life, awaiting a new project in which they could engage in. Thus, the circle of women is renewed—these are the same women who attend similar courses and meet "under the direction" of the same coordinators working for the same or a new non-governmental organization.

In the work of these and similar centers, there is no long-term perspective, and the main goal of donors—"empowering the local community"—is not realized in the way that the ("foreigners") have imagined. Hence, women remain left to their own devices after projects like the Women Center, and in the absence of cultural and entertainment programs, they are turn to the media and socializing with a small number of girlfriends. Socializing often comes down to retelling television content. In the absence of cultural and entertainment, sports and educationally enriched content, the post-conflict social environment also leads to a weakening of the initiative to spend leisure time actively.

These "excerpts" from the activities of interviewees in leisure time appear as a segment of the dialogue, which more or less clearly indicates the trend in which some minor changes occur and in the conditions of the post-war social environment. While the understanding of members of other communities was not shown clearly enough and often among our interviewees, their discontent over the routines of everyday life were more obvious. The "culprit" is someone/something else, because the responsibility for activities in their daily lives is not
recognized as a key element for the escape from a routinized social reality bound by low-intensity conflicts. Just for a moment, projects like the Women Center show women how leisure time can be used, even if it is limited solely to "female"/handicraft work like knitting and sewing. This "moment," however, was not a sufficient drive for the self-initiative of the women. The reason for this can be found in the fact that in such projects, mostly homemakers are active. If we take into account that interviewees, who were able to actively work, showed a significantly lower level of motivation for establishing interethnic contacts, we can come to the conclusion that women in an ethnically-divided city do not show enough will, and even less so, the initiative to frame their leisure time with creative activities, new contacts, and the enrichment of their everyday life, unless "someone from outside involves them." Nevertheless, our research shows that unemployed women have made several steps in this direction. Although they were guided by a variety of reasons as well as personal reasons, they "fled from home" and made their everyday life more interesting for at least a few months. The "flight" from the routinized everyday life was their short-term initiative.

During the summer of 2018, we repeated our research in the field. The Women Center, as noted stopped running without the initiative of civil sector activists to renew the existence of the center. The women with whom we conducted interviews in the first phase of the research did not remain in self-initiated contact, apart from sporadic encounters on the street, which are conditioned by life in the same quarter of the city. The woman who initiated the creation of the Women Center in 2003 is now leading a newly established non-governmental organization dealing with women's rights. A group of interviewees from the first phase of our research was included in the “network” of interethnic contacts in the divided city. Through discussions with
women who were interviewed in the first phase of the research, when we posed a question regarding interethnic contacts, we discovered the following:

K.K. (Albanian woman, single, 48): "We do not socialize anymore because the center does not exist. But I meet some of the women at the events of non-governmental organizations. Then we have a nice talk."

I.DŽ. (Bosniak woman, married, 54): "I stayed in contact with women living here in my neighborhood. We share the same life problems, and at least we have some small talk."

Š.M. (Albanian woman, married, 70): "We do not see each other any longer. We were better off at the center."

G.L. (Serbian woman, married, 60): "I do not see the women in private. Only if we connect through activities by non-governmental organizations."

G.A. (Albanian woman, single, 30): "We do not see each other any longer. We have different life responsibilities. Well, we knew that after closing the center we would not see each other ..."

The cited responses represent the essence of all interviews that we had with our interviewees. Several years ago, when the closure of the Women Center was certain, it was clear that a large number of women engaged in interethnic contacts through the initiative of the representatives of civil society organizations who, within their projects (financed by international donors), invited members of different ethnic groups to their events. Due to these events—usually followed by photos and promotion in the media and social networks—there was an impression of intensive interethnic encounters and cooperation between women. In essence, cooperation was initiated formally for the needs of project activities of non-governmental organizations, which makes it unjustified to assume that women meet on their own initiative, as this field research
explains. The Women Center was an example of good practice for the cited contacts. As it gave positive results at the micro level, eight years later in the field, we get the impression that its re-opening is necessary. However, the opening can only come through the engagement and enthusiasm of civil sector activists who have the capacity to lobby with international donors. In the meantime, however, in the socio-political sense, the so-called "Brussels Agreement" has become current, which the official Belgrade and Priština signed in April 2013, which in the field should include the "normalization of relations between the two sides" and taking over the jurisdiction by the Republic of Kosovo in the entire territory. In less than five years after this agreement was signed, there has been no clear outcomes in the everyday life of the actors. In addition, women were omitted in the political process at the negotiating table, as well as in all previous negotiations related to the political and formal-legal status of Kosovo. Therefore, some civil society activists focused their attention on the participation of women in the cited process, which is why the interethnic contacts of women once intrinsic for the Women Center were thrown into the "shadow." This again indicates the absence of the consistency and continuity of the life of actors in Kosovo from the micro to the macro level. The day-to-day events have an absolute priority in relation to a permanent and sustainable policy, the consequences of which would be positive in people's lives. Project financing and engagement of actors also serves as reasons for the current discontinuity and "captivity" of women, which again returns women to status quo, where they have a cyclical and routinized everyday life. When asked "Did the signature of the Brussels Agreement lead to more contacts between members of different nations?" the interviewees replied:

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K.K. (Albanian, single, 44): "No. It did not. No one knows how it will look like. That's why it didn't".

A.M. (Serbian woman, married, 53): "Not at all. How to bring peace and contacts when Albanians are increasingly walking through the northern part of the city and provoking Serbs? We're not safe again."

K.Š. (Bosniak woman, single, 32): "I hope it will bring about improvement. It's time for people to start living again normally."

The given responses show that the social and political circumstances seen in the Kosovska Mitrovica city were exclusively conditioned by the ethnicity of women. With the Serbian interviewees, it was obvious that they were dissatisfied with the signed agreement and the changes the transition to the formal and legal system of Kosovo would bring to the Serbian people. Dissatisfaction was also obvious with the Albanian women, as they themselves, pointed to media statements by some politicians who believed that the agreement would "give too much" to Serbs, although they did not say much about it. Only with the Bosniak women was there a trend that the agreement would lead to the normalization of relations among members of different ethnic groups, at the level of everyday life. If we recall that the Bosniak people share a common language with the Serbian people, and with the Albanians a common religion, it is clearer why they openly spoke about the hope in normalizing the relationship between the two antagonistic ethnic groups. Finally, we asked the interviewees if they regarded themselves as a religious person and if their religiosity "facilitated" their daily life in the post-war city.

N.G. (Serbian woman, married, 64): "I am religious. I regularly go to church and fast during four major fasting periods, as well as on Wednesday and Friday. I did not do that before the war. The war brought us refugees from the southern part of the city. Albanians violently
entered our apartment. The war has brought us numerous fears and traumas. I found refuge in Orthodoxy. And all these years later I think that only God can help us in life in Kosovo.

K.K. (Albanian woman, single, 44): "Well, yes. I believe in God. I do not go to the mosque often, but we all fast at Ramazan at home. And we celebrate holidays. A little more after the war".

K.DŽ. (Bosniak woman, married, 48): "I am religious. I prayed to God for my two daughters to give birth to a son. And finally, I got a son after seven years."

T.A. (Albanian woman, single, 30): "Yes, yes. We fast regularly. We believe in God. You must do so. We are more peaceful when we think of God ..."

I.A. (Serbian woman, single, 28): "I am religious, but I do not go to church regularly, nor do I fast. I fast only on Easter Day and Good Friday. I know that afterwards a lot of people started going to church and the like, but I did not. I respect religion, how I couldn’t. We live in Kosovo, but I do not exaggerate ..."

The responses of the interviewees point to the trend of the revitalization of religion in the post-war social circumstances. Serbian women expressed very clearly through the narrative of faith that "only God can help" when it came to life in Kosovo in recent years, when all daily political processes were "against" the Serbian people. There is a trend of an increase in the level of religiousness with the interviewees of other religions as well, but they were not ready to talk about it in more detail with a researcher who did not belong to their religion.

When asked, "Does religion help to make contacts?" the interviewees replied:

AM. (Albanian woman, single, 27): "Well, I don't believe. How? These are different religions."
I.R. (Serbian woman, married, 36): "It doesn't help at all. Religions are different. Being a Serb or an Albanian means being a Christian or a Muslim. How can religion after the war help in contacts?"

K.DŽ. (Bosniak woman, married, 48): "It can help when we go for a holiday to visit each other for coffee in the neighborhood. But these are neighbors with whom we have been in good relations for years. Religion has not helped us to respect each other, but what kind of people we are."

The responses of the interviewees were basically compatible. The members of all the ethnic/religious groups mentioned the fact that membership in a religion in a post-war divided city did not help them to initiate interethnic contacts. On the other hand, there is a respect for the religion of "those others," which is primarily manifested through respect for large religious holidays (like Easter with Orthodox Christians and Bayram with Muslims). This is not surprising, if we remember that tolerance is the postulate of all monotheistic religions. In this connection, it is clear that believers, who identify themselves with their religion, will show respect for members of other religions. At the same time, this is not a sufficient condition for the initiation of interethnic/interreligious contacts, which again leads us to the conclusion that these contacts are possible 20 years after an open ethnic conflict, in two ways: spontaneously through the maintenance of good neighborly relations established years before the war, and organized through the initiative of representatives of organizations in the civil sector. Spontaneous contacts are long-term and active, but their coverage is symbolically small. Organized contacts are more comprehensive and transparent (because they are often accompanied by taking photographs), but short-term and organized with the aim of fulfilling terms of references of civil society organizations. Bearing this in mind, this repeated research suggests that in the near future, there
will be no prospect of long-term and spontaneous interethnic and interreligious contacts of women in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica.

**Concluding remarks**

This paper presents a contribution to the study of the everyday lives of women in the ethnically-divided post-conflict city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. It is a kind of a "social laboratory," where on a geographically very limited area of the northern part of the city (2 km²), cumulative processes of socio-political (dis)integration were carried out. The description of the everyday life of the "invisible" inhabitants of this city—women, was a very demanding and complex task for researchers, all the more so that we should investigate the historical (dis) continuity of everyday life and the social position of women, which are a prerequisite for understanding their everyday life in the post-war social conditions. Hence, the first part of this paper chronologically depicts the characteristics of the everyday life of women in Kosovo in the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, highlighting some works of local and foreign researchers about the everyday life of women in this territory. The second part of the paper presents the results of part of the theoretical and empirical research on the everyday life of women in the post-war ethnically-divided city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. Bearing in mind that this is an extensive field research, for the purposes of this paper, we presented the results of the place for the interethnic gathering of women, the so-called Women Center, located in an ethnically plural part of the city, Mikronaselje/Kodra Minatoreva (2010 and 2011), and the consequences for which the non-existence of this center provoked regarding the
interethnic contacts among the women (in the repeated research in 2018).

The field research shows that in the postwar period, the everyday lives of the social actors are deeply subordinated to conflicts that are part of the past but reflect on the present, and the (un)willingness of the actors to live in a multi-ethnic environment are due to numerous dominant factors that make it difficult to create a peaceful atmosphere. The most dominant factor in such a reality is the deep political segregation of urban space, which is subordinated to all segments of the public and private everyday lives of citizens. Such segregation has led citizens to manifestly live "one next to another," and latently "one against others" in a physically very limited urban space. In this regard, this research clearly suggests that even after almost 20 years after the end of the ethnic conflict, there is no real willingness for social actors to live together in a multicultural environment. It again indicates that the above-mentioned socio-cultural space is exclusively ethnically plural and that in the near future, multiculturalism will not occur. The situation in the field indicates a kind of pragmatism that is tacitly applied by all actors: the international community, local representatives of NGOs, and the women themselves as the ultimate "beneficiaries of services" of these organizations. Following the published written reports of international donors and civil society organizations, interethnic contacts and cooperation between members of different ethnic groups occurred in the first post-war years. Now this cooperation "runs smoothly." This is true. In this regard, as long as Kosovo is the territory where the mandate is held by international organizations, whose funding is allocated to local civil society organizations, interethnic contacts between women will be quite certain. Nevertheless, after 20 years of activities of these organizations, women are self-initiatively engaged in socializing in everyday life in a negligible number. In this regard, this research shows that civil society organizations play an important role in organizing interethnic meetings and
women's cooperation, although the scope of their work is small compared to the number of women who inhabit the cited territory. Research shows that despite emancipation steps in terms of lifestyle, women continue to suffer the consequences of socialization in the traditionally-patriarchal social context, described in the first part of the paper. In this connection, and with regard to the sustainability of interethnic contacts, it is certain that they will exist as long as they are initiated "from the side"—from the representatives of international and civil society organizations. It is not possible to predict when in the future women will be more prepared for informal and spontaneous contacts in Kosovo in 2018. The reasons for this should be sought in the unfinished political process of the "Brussels Agreement," which should lead to the "normalization of relations" between Belgrade and Priština, which no ethnic group knows much about. Thus, members of antagonistic ethnic groups—Serbs and Albanians—observe the cited agreement with disagreement, believing that the "other" group will get "too much." And women are excluded from this decision-making process, as in all previous negotiations related to Kosovo, which again points to their socio-political marginalization. Bearing all this in mind, the absence of spontaneous interethnic contacts of women is clear and the "questionable" motive of the representatives of the civil sector in initiating interethnic contacts is also clear, all of which contribute to making the everyday life and social position of women clearer, namely, in these post-war social conditions where they are left "to their own devices."
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